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Effects of Marketing Variables on Adoption of Social Media as Promotional Tool by Small Businesses in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja

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ABSTRACT

The growth of internet access and mobile phone use has linked millions of potential customers into a network that offers businesses significant market opportunities with minimal marketing expenses. The impact of marketing factors on the uptake of social media as a promotional tool by small enterprises in FCT, Abuja, was investigated. A survey research design was employed, using questionnaires as the means for data collection. Information was gathered from 438 owners and managers of small businesses in Abuja. Structural partial least square equation modeling was utilized to analyze the data. The findings revealed that competitor influence, customer influence, and compatibility all had a positive but insignificant effect on social media adoption in FCT, Abuja. The research indicated that social media platforms should work to enhance their compatibility with various devices, operating systems, and browsers. This entails refining their user interfaces, features, and functionalities to guarantee a smooth experience across different platforms. By simplifying access and engagement with social media on users' preferred devices, compatibility can have a positive effect on adoption rates.

Keywords: competitor influence, customer influence, compatibility, social media adoption.

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INTRODUCTION

Around the world, businesses have increasingly turned to social media, driven by the expansion of internet availability and the rising significance of real-time engagement along with offering personalized and interactive experiences to a vast and varied audience. Utilizing social media as a marketing instrument involves companies leveraging online platforms to connect with their target customers. Arsath (2018) attributes the appeal of social media in marketing to its reliability, consistency, and immediacy, which provides substantial opportunities for businesses to showcase their products to a multitude of potential consumers who may exhibit genuine interest. The prospects offered by social media are generating heightened interest in marketing as professionals in the field start to view it as a crucial aspect of their marketing strategies. Various branches of marketing, including marketing intelligence, sentiment analysis, public relations, marketing communications, and product management, present avenues for applying social media. Social media channels like blogs, online forums, and digital communities influence marketing effectiveness and can yield numerous advantages for both businesses and consumers.

Small enterprises in Nigeria, classified as those employing between 10 and 49 individuals (SMEDAN, 2007), can particularly benefit from transforming their marketing strategies to better communicate their brand to their consumer audience. Social media platforms—categorized into Content Syndication, Content Sharing, and Community Building—such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat enhance the marketing capabilities of businesses by serving as new venues for commerce, developing customer bases, and promoting products. These factors reinforce their reputation as powerful marketing tools for businesses. Specifically, as noted by Arsath (2018), using social media for marketing by businesses can help lower marketing expenses, broaden outreach, encourage social engagement, and promote the widespread dissemination of information regarding businesses through word-of-mouth communication.

Strategizing entails evaluating various options for guiding businesses toward achieving their desired objectives. Social media, as an efficient business strategy, plays a significant role in marketing and fostering customer relationships, making it particularly advantageous for small enterprises due to its minimal barriers to entry (Adebuyi et al., 2015). As a marketing instrument, social media enables businesses to connect with a vast audience quickly and easily. Platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat provide businesses with an efficient means to raise awareness of their products and marketing initiatives, as well as to build relationships by conveying a positive image and engaging in dialogue about their brand (Oxborrow, 2012). The Nigerian market is increasingly conducive to social media marketing. Notably, the rapid growth of mobile phone adoption in Nigeria is a remarkable trend. As of 2019, Nigeria ranked 7th worldwide in the total number of mobile phone users, with this figure at 172 million (Ogunde, 2020). Of these users, O'Dea (2020) estimates that approximately 25 to 40 million are smartphone users, anticipating growth to 140 million by 2025. This occurs alongside 128 mobile internet subscriptions (Ogunde, 2020). Nevertheless, small businesses have been hesitant to utilize social media in their marketing efforts to engage customers and expand. Therefore, the study intends to identify the factors that affect the adoption of social media as a marketing tool by small enterprises. The progress in internet access and mobile phone usage has linked millions of potential customers into a network that offers businesses significant market opportunities at low marketing costs. Despite these considerable advantages, a low adoption rate of social media marketing has been observed among small businesses in FCT Abuja, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

I. To determine the effect of competitor influence on the adoption of social media as a promotional tool by small businesses in the FCT.
II. To determine the extent to which customer influence affects the adoption of social media as a promotional tool by small businesses in the FCT.
III. To assess the effect compatibility has on the adoption of social media as a promotional tool by small businesses in the FCT.

Conceptual review Miller et al. (2016) characterize social media as the blending of traditional broadcast methods with private one-on-one communication, offering users a range of group sizes and varying levels of privacy, which they refer to as scalable sociality. Drahošová and Balco (2017) emphasize that social media allows individuals to share perspectives and ideas, engage in discussions on numerous topics, and connect with others online. This interaction occurs through various audio-visual formats, including voice notes, voice messages, and text-based communication. It may also take the shape of videos, images, and other visual media (Drahošová & Balco, 2017). Scott and Orlikowski (2014) provide a distinct definition of social media in relation to small businesses, describing it as a facilitator of specific business tasks by harnessing technological capabilities. In this context, social media serves as a tool that enables businesses to create user-generated content without the need for physical presence, relying on the active participation and online contributions of many individuals across different times and locations. Gomathi and Gowtham (2013) contend that social media continues to develop, granting consumers around the globe innovative and significant avenues to connect with individuals, events, and brands that are of importance to them. Moreover, social media is rapidly expanding and becoming an essential component of our everyday lives.

Clement (2020) notes that social media is among the most popular online activities, with an estimated 2.95 billion users in 2019, a number expected to reach nearly 3.43 billion by 2023. There has been a noticeable increase in social media usage in developing countries. Clement identifies one contributing factor to this trend as the growing access to connection opportunities via mobile and tablet devices, the availability of which continues to rise globally. Currently, there are over 8 billion mobile devices that offer technologies infiltrating all facets of life. Additionally, the mobile nature of social media has increased significantly, largely due to social applications (Clement, 2020; Global Mobile Trends, 2020).

The primary difference between social media and traditional media is the interactive nature of the former, as well as the ability for anyone to create, contribute to, comment on, and respond to media content (Drahošová & Balco, 2017). Unlike traditional forms of media such as print publications, television, radio, and outdoor advertising, social media utilizes advanced technologies to disseminate digital content over the internet and mobile networks (Burton, 2009). This technology enables individuals to connect with others actively and empowers them to create and share content, while also allowing them to acquire and process community knowledge through collaboration (Lewis, 2010).

Marketing Variables

According to Cronje et al. (2007), marketing is a process that involves managing tasks and making decisions aimed at effectively addressing both opportunities and challenges in a constantly changing environment, by creating and delivering a market offering that meets consumer needs while achieving the goals of the business, consumers, and society. Marketing is fundamentally an exchange process that ultimately results in the transfer of products from the business to the target customers. Lamb et al. (2007) suggest that this exchange relationship between businesses and

consumers revolves around anticipating and fulfilling customer needs in a way that is profitable, which requires a managerial approach that is more efficient than that of competitors.

Social Media as a Promotional Tool

Promotion is defined by Chaffey, et al., (2006) as a marketing function concerned with the persuasive communication of components of a business' marketing program to target customers for the purpose of facilitating exchange. Kotler and Armstrong (2008) point out the promotional process adopted by businesses occurs in terms of a mix made up of a blend of advertising, sales promotion, public relationship, personal selling, and direct marketing tools that the business utilizes in the communication its value, and building its customer relationships. As highlighted by Góngora (2016), organizations who apply social media in their business functions, frequently mention reasons why they do so. One of these is to build brand awareness. Because all business profiles are unique, social media gives businesses the ability to develop a personality on social networks. The look and feel of their brand are all incorporated in its overall view, allowing them to easily stand out in the eyes of their customers.

Competitor influence

Compatibility describes the extent to which a technological innovation is perceived as being consistent with the existing values, goals, needs and past experiences of potential adopters (Krishnamoorthy & Damle, 2017). Compatibility is, therefore, a crucial element in the adoption of social media by businesses. Within this context, Nurliza (2018) points out that the concern centres around the alignment or fit between the business and the social media platform they choose to engage with. Social media compatibility can be seen in terms of conformance with business objectives, in which case, the social media channel should align with business goals and provide the tools and resources necessary to meet them effectively. Such goals may include brand awareness, fostering customer engagement, or promoting products and services (Nurliza, 2018).

Veldeman et al. (2017) see compatibiltiy of social media in terms of consistency with the brand identity of a business. A strong brand identity is crucial for businesses, and social media platforms should be compatible with the brand's voice, tone, and values. Each platform has its own culture and user expectations, and businesses may evaluate whether their brand identity resonates with that culture. Casual brands, for example, may have different expectations from the use of social media, from more professionally-oriented ones. Compatibility can also involve the evaluation of resources and expertise available within the business. Here, businesses evaluate whether they can allocate the necessary resources and expertise to utilize the platform optimally. Considerations may include the time, budget, and manpower required to manage the chosen platform effectively. Some platforms demand more active community engagement and content creation, while others may require more advertising or analytics expertise (Veldeman et al., 2017).

Customer influence

The customer influence relates to pressure from customers as perceived by business enterprises. Customer pressure, as a component of social media adoption by businesses, refers to the influence and demands exerted by customers on businesses to establish a presence and engage on social media platforms. McKinsey (2022) stated that this pressure can arise from various factors, including customer preferences, feedback and reviews, influencer culture and trends, competitive landscape, and the need for effective customer service.

ResearchGate. (2022) stated that businesses face the expectation to establish a presence on social media platforms to meet customer demands, engage with their audience, manage reputation, and stay competitive.

By responding to customer pressure and adopting social media, businesses can leverage the benefits of these platforms to enhance customer relationships, expand their reach, and ultimately achieve their business objectives.

Compatibility

Since social media serves as a form of information systems, it can be utilized as part of organizational and informational strategies to counter industry competitors. According to Samsudeen et al. (2021), competitive pressure refers to the level of rivalry within an industry that arises from globalization, advancements in technology, and the utilization of knowledge. Organizations can leverage technology adoption as a means of innovation within a competitive landscape. Ahmad and Monfaradi (2017) reference a bandwagon effect, in which integrated social media applications and platforms are embraced by all relevant trading partners. This bandwagon effect describes the psychological tendency to embrace a specific technology simply because other companies have adopted it, sometimes disregarding existing corporate strategies. The widespread adoption of a particular technology significantly impacts others' willingness to follow suit, and firms operating in volatile business contexts are particularly susceptible to this bandwagon effect (Ahmad & Monfaradi, 2017).

Empirical Review

Compatibility and Social Media Adoption

Gyamfi (2015) evaluated factors affecting the adoption of social media as a promotional tool among SMEs in Kumasi Metropolis, in the Asanti Region in Ghana. The sample used for the study consisted of owner-managers of SMEs with installed internet facilities in Kumasi. This was identified as a simple

random sample of 100 respondents. The SMEs surveyed in the study covered various industries, including finance, retail, hardware, manufacturing, clothing and stationery. Data was collected in primary form, through the use of a researcher-administered questionnaire. The collected data was analyzed with the use of graphs, table, as well as mean and standard deviation. Findings from the study supported the view that technological compatibility had strong positive and significant impact on the adoption of social media as a promotional tool among the firms. Although a good contribution to literature, the method used in the determination of the sample size was not clearly shown. This is important to ensure that the sample used is a good representation of the population, whose characteristics it aimed to reflect. Additionally, the researcher claimed to have also used secondary data, although no evidence of that was seen.

Customer Influence and Social Media Adoption

In a UAE study, Jabeen (2017) assessed determinants of social media adoption among SMEs. A random sample of 107 SMEs from the Khalifa Fund for Enterprise Development (an Abu-Dhabi based nonprofit entrepreneur support organization focusing on the entrepreneurial development of Emirati nationals) was used in the research survey. Primary data was collected from these enterprises and analyzed with the Pearson Correlation statistic. The findings arrived at showed that pressure from customers had a high, positive and statistically significant correlation with the adoption of social media as a promotional tool among the studied firms.

Al Rahbi (2017) carried out a study aimed at accessing the factors influencing the adoption of social media in SMEs in the region of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), with particular reference to Muscat, the capital city of Oman. The study adopted semi-structured interviews of 18 SME owner-managers, as well as survey of 205 SMEs in Muscat. The primary data obtained was analyzed with the use of Logistic Regression. The findings arrived at showed that customer influence had a positive and significant impact on the adoption of social media as a promotional tool by SMEs.

Competitor Influence and Social Media Adoption

Honinah and Alhakimi (2021) explored social media adoption in local NGOs in Yemen. Applying quantitative methods, primary data was collected from a sample of 96 respondents across 11 local NGOs in Yemen - National Foundation for Development and Humanitarian Response, Relief and Development Peer Foundation, Ghadaq For Development, Sustainable Development Foundation, Millennium Development Foundation, Youth Leadership Development Foundation, Yemen Alkhair for Relief & Development Foundation, For all Foundation, Mayar Foundation for Development, Resilient Communities Organization, Building Foundation for Development. NGOs were those which were registered with the United Nations, had a valid email address, and were located in Sana'a but have different branches across the country. Additionally, respondents were officers in charge of communication or public relations, project officers, senior managers, and chief executive officers. The use of simple percentages, as well as mean and standard deviation was employed in the analysis of the collected data. Results obtained supported the finding that competitor influence did not have an effect on the adoption of social media.

Theoretical Framework

Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) Theory

The DOI theory, created by Everett M. Rogers in 1962, is recognized as one of the earliest and most widely utilized theories regarding social science adoption across a variety of fields. According to the DOI theory, the perception of the benefits and features of an innovation by potential adopters is more crucial than the actual metrics of those characteristics, and this perception significantly affects their decisions to adopt. The process of technology diffusion involves a series of activities that begins at research and development (R&D) and continues through to the commercialization of the product, which includes advertising, marketing, and promotion. By understanding the diffusion process and the dynamics of technology development, companies can develop more effective and predictive models to facilitate timely and informed decision-making (Alatawi et al., 2013; Rogers, 2003; Hameed et al., 2012).

The DOI theory elucidates the reasons, methods, and pace at which new technologies and ideas permeate cultures at both the organizational and individual levels (Oliveira et al., 2014). The DOI theory identifies four primary factors influencing the diffusion process: innovation, time, communication, and social systems (Rogers, 2003). The innovation aspect of the DOI theory comprises six key characteristics that affect the choice to adopt innovations. i. Compatibility. ii. Relative advantage. iii. Trialability. iv. Complexity. v. Uncertainty. vi. Observability. All of these characteristics, except for uncertainty and complexity, exert a positive effect on the rate at which innovations and technologies are adopted (Bose & Luo, 2011; Risselada et al., 2014). The investigation is directed by the Diffusion of Innovation theory as it outlines the factors influencing technology adoption.

METHODOLOGY

The study used surveys and structured questionnaires to collect data from 385 managers/owners of SBEs in Abuja. This will allow for statistical analysis of the relationships between social media adoption and Small Business. The study employed a Snowball sampling technique to ensure representation from various SBEs managers/owners. Data was collected primarily through surveys and questionnaires distributed to the selected SBEs managers/Owners through google form. Questions was designed to assess perceptions of

SBEs activities and their effect on the social media Adoption

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

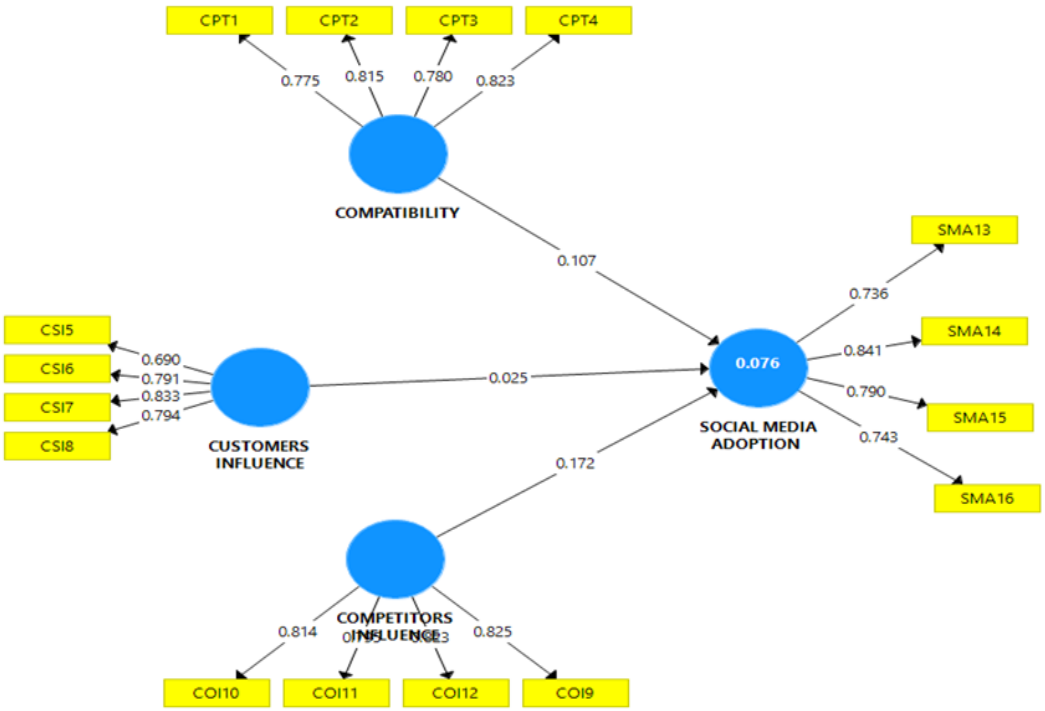
Variable	Mean	Median	Min	Max	SDV	Kurtosis	Skewness
CPT	4.49	3.96	1	5	0.67	0.36	-1.07
CSI	4.35	3.75	1	5	0.75	1.74	-1.27
COI	4.25	4.75	1	5	0.85	3.29	-1.49
SMA	4.33	3.75	1	5	0.76	1.54	-1.21

Source: SMART, PLS Output, 2024.

The table above provided statistical description of the variables as expressed in the data collected in terms of the mean, minimum, maximum, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis values. Compatibility (CPT) had minimum and maximum values of 1 and 5 respectively. The average value stood at 4.4 and a standard deviation value of 0.67, while skewness and kurtosis values stood within the normality range. Customer Influence (CSI) had minimum and maximum values of 1and 5 respectively. The average value stood at 4.35 and a standard deviation value of 0.75, while skewness and kurtosis values stood within the normality range. Competitors Influence (COI) showed minimum and maximum values of 1 and 5 respectively with an average value of 4.25 and a standard deviation value of 0.85 while skewness and kurtosis values stood within the normality range. SMA showed minimum and maximum values of 1 and 5 respectively with an average value of 4.3 and a standard deviation value of 0.76.

Indicator Reliability

In assessing the measurement model, we begin by assessing the item outer loadings. As a rule, loadings above 0.7 are recommended, as they indicate that the construct explains more than 50 percent of the indicator's variance, thus providing acceptable item reliability (Hair, et al., 2019). However, Hair, et al., (2019) also posited that low but significant indicator loading (less than 0.50) can be included. Also, outer loadings less than 0.4 should be deleted and in exploratory research, loadings more than 0.4 and less than 0.7 can be retained if the average variance extracted in satisfied (Hair, et al., 2014) hence justifying why indicators



Source: SMART-PLS Output, 2024

Convergent Validity

This explains the extent to which constructs converge to explain the variance of its items. It is assessed by evaluating the average variance extracted (AVE). The minimum value of the AVE should be higher than 0.50. All the constructs satisfied this requirement as shown in the table below and as such are valid for the study.

Table 2: Construct Reliability and Validity of the Indicators

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Compatibility	.811	.819	.875	.638
Customer Influence	.784	.802	.860	.606
Competitors Influence	.831	.836	.887	.663
Social Media Adoption	.784	.800	.860	.606

Source: SMART PLS Output, 2024

Discriminant validity

Discriminant validity refers to the degree to which a construct is empirically separate from other constructs within the structural model. Traditional approaches like the Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross loadings have been used to evaluate discriminant validity; however, Henseler et al. (2015) demonstrated that the Fornell-Larcker criterion is not effective, especially when the indicator loadings on a construct are only marginally different. As an alternative, Henseler et al. (2015) introduced the Heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations. The HTMT is defined as the average of item correlations between different constructs in relation to the (geometric) mean of the average correlations for the items within the same construct. Discriminant validity concerns arise when HTMT values exceed 0.90 (Henseler et al., 2015).

Table 3: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) Criterion

	Compatibility	Customer Influence	Competitors Influence	Social Media Adoption
Compatibility	1.00			
Customer Influence	.792	1.00		
Competitors Influence	.754	.698	1.00	
Social Media Adoption	.579	.609	.611	1.00

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2024

Table 4: Path Coefficient of the Model

Variable	Beta	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values	Decision	F^2 value
Compatibility -> Social Media Adoption	.107	1.029	.304	Accepted	0.05
Competitors Influence ->Social Media Adoption	.172	1.904	.058	Rejected	0.010
Customers Influence ->Social Media Adoption	.025	.203	.839	Accepted	0.000

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2024

Hypothesis One

H_{O1}: Compatibility has no significant effect on Social Media Adoption in FCT Abuja

The result of the test as shown in table 4.8 revealed that Compatibility has positive and insignificantly affected Social Media Adoption in FCT Abuja, with β = 0. 107 and P = 0.304. Thus, hypothesis one was supported and therefore accepted at 5% level of insignificance. Since there is enough statistical evidence to accept the alternative hypothesis, the study concludes that Compatibility positively and insignificantly affect Social Media Adoption in FCT Abuja.

Hypothesis Two

H_{O2}: Competitors Influence -> has no significant effect on Social Media Adoption in FCT Abuja.

The result from table 4shows that Competitors Influence has insignificant effect on Social Media Adoption in FCT Abuja, with β = 0. 172 and P= 0.058. Thus, null hypothesis two which states that Competitors Influence has no significant effect on Social Media Adoption in Abuja was rejected at 5% level of insignificance. The alternative hypothesis which states that Competitors Influence has significant effect on Social Media Adoption in FCT, Abuja

Hypothesis Three

H_{O3}: Customers Influence -> has no significant effect on Social Media Adoption in FCT Abuja.

The result from table 4 shows that Competitors Influence has insignificant effect on Social Media Adoption in FCT Abuja, with β = 0.025 and P= 0. .839. Thus, null hypothesis two which states that customers Influence has no significant effect on Social Media Adoption in Abuja was rejected at 5% level of insignificance. The alternative hypothesis which states that Competitors Influence has significant effect on Social Media Adoption in FCT, Abuja

Next, the study assessed explanatory power of the model using coefficient of determination (R^2). The R^2

value stood at 0. 076, implying that 76% of variation in Social Media Adoption is explained by marketing variables. The remaining percentage of variation could be explained by other factors not included in the study.

The f^2 examines the effect caused on the endogenous construct's R^2 value as a result of removal of a certain predictor construct. Cohen (1998) guideline was used to measure the effect size which revealed that all relationships were either small or medium effect.

Table 4.5: R^2 and Predictive Relevance of the Model

	R Square	R Square Adjusted	P Val.
SMEs Performance	.076	.066	0.000

Source: Smart PLS Output, 2024

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Marketing variables has no significant effect on Social Media Adoption in FCT Abuja. The study examined the effect of Marketing Variables on Adoption of social media as Promotional Tool by Small Businesses in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The findings from the analysis above indicate that the model is adequately fit to measure the relationship between marketing variables and Social Media Adoption in FCT Abuja. Based on the foregoing, the study tested one hypothesis and evidenced were provided by the study results that marketing variable affects Social Media Adoption in Abuja moderately as indicated by the coefficient of determination (R^2). The findings on the specific independent variables and how they affect Social Media Adoption are discussed below:

The first finding revealed that Compatibility has a positive and insignificant effect on Social Media Adoption in FCT Abuja. This implies that as the level of compatibility increases, there is an expected increase in social media adoption in FCT Abuja. In other words, when there is a higher degree of compatibility between certain factors (e.g., technology, user preferences, infrastructure) and social media platforms, it tends to lead to higher levels of social media adoption. This finding is consistent with that of Gyamfi (2015) who found that that Compatibility has positive but insignificant effect on Social Media Adoption in Abuja.

The second finding revealed that Competitors Influence has a positive and insignificant effect on Social Media Adoption in FCT Abuja. This implies that as the level of competitors influence increases, there is an expected increase in social media adoption Abuja. In other words, when competitors have a greater influence, it tends to lead to higher levels of social media adoption. This finding is consistent with that of Jabeen (2017) who found that Competitors Influence has positive but significant effect on Social Media Adoption in FCT Abuja.

The third finding revealed that Customers Influence has a positive and insignificant effect on Social Media Adoption in FCT Abuja. This implies that as the level of customers influence" increases, there is an expected increase in social media adoption in FCT Abuja. In other words, when customers have a greater influence, it tends to lead to higher levels of social media adoption. This finding is consistent with that of Honinah and Alhakimi (2021 who found that Competitors Influence has positive but significant effect on Social Media Adoption in FCT Abuja.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, this study plays a significant role in the adoption of social media in FCT Abuja. The positive effect suggests that as the level of compatibility between individuals and social media platforms increases, there is an anticipated increase in the adoption of social media in the region. It is recommended that the social media platforms should strive to improve their compatibility with various devices, operating systems, and browsers. This includes optimizing their user interfaces, features, and functionalities to ensure a seamless experience across different platforms. By making it easier for users to access and engage with social media on their preferred devices, compatibility can positively influence adoption rates.

I. Social media should keep a close eye on your competitors' social media activities and monitor the conversations and feedback around their brand. This allows you to stay informed about industry trends, customer preferences, and potential gaps that you can address. Additionally, promptly respond to any negative feedback or customer queries to demonstrate your brand's commitment to customer satisfaction.

II. Social media should encourage customers to create and share content related to your brand or products on social media. This can include reviews, testimonials, photos, videos, or creative user-generated campaigns. User-generated content serves as social proof and can influence others to adopt your brand or engage with your social media presence.

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